

CITY OF ELGIN
HUNAHA PARK PROJECT
June, 1995

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Opportunity/Problem:

Elgin is a timber dependent community in Northeast Oregon with a population of 1,705. The local economy has been declining since 1980. Elgin's economy was determined by the McKetta Study in November of 1993 as being 74.08% dependent on timber resources. This heavy dependence combined with the recent decline in timber sales from public lands in Northeast Oregon places Elgin's economic future at extreme risk.

Elgin's economy is not only heavily dependent on timber, but also other timber related manufacturing. There are very few service businesses that contribute to the economy and the tourism sector not developed at all. Elgin has no retirement facilities or apartments near its downtown which all but eliminates attracting retirees to the community as an economic development alternative. Tourism development is the most likely strategy available to the community to diversify its economy.

The Elgin 2010 Committee, a Community Response Team, developed a strategic plan in 1994 to improve Elgin's quality of life. The committee has 44 volunteer members representing community interests and government agencies including members from the Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla National Forests.

The Elgin 2010 Committee's first and highest priority is job creation. Its four highest priority projects are all related to job creation. Two of the projects involve retaining and recruiting new businesses and developing an industrial park. A grant received last year from the US Forest Service is currently being used to finance engineering and economic assessment which will allow the city to build an industrial park and recruitment program. This project is in process and will likely be implemented by the city during the next fiscal year with no outside financial assistance. The next highest priority project is tourism related and is titled the Hunaha (WHO-na-ha) Park Project.

Elgin's location on Highway 82 (Wallowa Lake Highway) makes tourism development an obvious alternative for job creation. Statistics from the Oregon Highway Division indicate that about 2,000 vehicles pass through Elgin every day from late spring to early fall. The vast majority of these vehicles are tourists traveling to Wallowa Lake, a popular tourist destination just 48 miles away. Because of the physical barriers created by mountains in the region, Highway 82 is the only reliable route in Oregon to reach Wallowa County. As a result, almost all the tourist traveling to Wallowa County pass through Elgin's downtown on their way. As one Elgin 2010 member stated, "This cow passes through Elgin every day and we need to start milking it".

As a preliminary step to developing this project, an informal survey was taken during a weekend at Wallowa Lake in the summer of 1993. The survey was to find out what tourist thought about Elgin. To our surprise, over 60% of the respondents indicated they did not know where Elgin was located in spite the fact that all indicated they traveled on Highway 82 on their way to Wallowa Lake. The other major response of interest was that there was a significant lack of adequate overnight camping facilities for people with recreational vehicles. Many indicated they could not find an RV park with vacancies anywhere North of La Grande (68 miles away). This information told us that an opportunity existed develop a project which found its way into our strategic plan.

In 1994, the City of Elgin contracted with Planwest and Associates, a landscape architectural firm, to design an RV park on 4.5 acres owned by the City. The site is located on the Grande Ronde River and has become a popular launching point for rafters. The site was used as a dump site for log yard debris from 1972 to 1985 and as a result will not support plant life except for the most hearty weeds.

The architect was instructed to design an RV park and maximize the use of the land available for camping while improving the existing raft launching site. The city also contracted with KJC Consulting to determine if the park could be operated at a break-even basis over a long period of time.

The first big issue on the park was concern over potential contamination from the log yard debris. It is common for log yard debris to have high levels of hydrocarbons, primarily the result of hydraulic fluid and oil spilling from log yard machinery. An independent soil scientist was hired to test the ground and found that the soil had only slight traces of hydrocarbons and was well within tolerable limits.

The only other significant issue was mixing day use and overnight use at the park. There were several lengthy discussions between the architect and the Elgin 2010 Committee over potential conflict that often arises between campers and day users of a facility. Several design components were built into the design of the park to limit these conflicts. The design work also included a recommendation to include an on-site park manager who could provide around the clock supervision of the park. This will help to resolve any conflicts before they become a problem. It will also help to achieve a high level of collection of overnight camping fees.

After months of preliminary design work and review by the Elgin 2010 Committee, the completed design and cost estimates were presented in June of 1995 for review. The design includes 19 RV camping spaces, overflow parking space for an additional 8 vehicles, 14 parking spaces for raft launchers and other day use, restrooms, communal picnic area, and dramatic landscape improvements. The economic analysis concluded that the park could achieve a break-even financial position with a relatively low occupancy rate and a worse case scenario for expenses.

The closest RV sites are the Rendezvous RV Park in La grande (20 miles) and the State Park at Minam campground on the border of Union and Wallowa Counties (15 miles). The proposed park will include water, electric, and sewer service to each camping space and will have paved driving surfaced throughout the park. The raft launch area will have 9 parking spaces with a turn around area. A centrally located bathroom and covered picnic shelter provides a physical barrier between the RV camping and day use area. Each camping space includes fire pits, benches, picnic table, charcoal/wood grills, and trees to seclude camping areas. The park will meet ADA requirements.

The project will provide the Elgin community with an anchor facility which will bring tourists to the area and keep them there for an extended period. This will help to put Elgin on the map as a tourist destination which will in turn allow for further tourism development and allow the community to create a tourism base for the community. This project is an important step in diversifying and strengthening Elgin's economy.

Goals and Objectives:

The following is taken from the Elgin 2010 Strategic Plan:

Goal 1: By the year 2000 create a net gain of 100 new family wage jobs through expansion, recruitment and development of businesses in Elgin.

The goal states the creation of a net gain of 100 family wage jobs. This translates into creating enough jobs to compensate for losses in the timber industry and still have 100 more jobs than now exist in Elgin.

Objective 4: Develop recreational facility at Hunaha Park Site.

The following actions are identified in the plan under this strategy:

1. Determine the feasibility of a city park and the Grande Ronde River, including an RV Park, raft launching facility, and interpretive trails and facilities.
2. Design and develop park facilities as feasible.

These statements reflect the desire to develop the park in stages as determined to be feasible. The project submitted under this application is stage one of a two stage project as currently defined by the committee. The second stage will be to construct walking and interpretive trails as well as fishing platforms and a foot bridge across the Grande Ronde in addition to fish habitat improvements in the river at the park site. A third stage will be an underwater viewing station which will allow visitors a chance to see fish in their natural habitat and get a different perspective on habitat needs in the Grande Ronde Basin.

Work Plan:

The City of Elgin will put the construction out to bid and reserves the right to split the work into two or more bids to achieve the best possible price for the work. The city will conduct part of the work itself in cooperation with the Union County Road Department. The work has not been bid out at this time because construction will be scheduled for the spring and early summer of 1996. Contractors are not usually willing to agree to performing contractual work on a fixed price contract a year in advance.

Over the past three years, the city and Union County have entered into cooperative agreements for chip sealing of streets. During this period the city paid for the rock, oil base, and fuel for the road equipment while the county donated the use of its equipment and construction crew. This has resulted in significant cost savings to the city while allowing the county to keep its road crew busy during the paving season at a minimal cost. Oregon statutes allow for this type of cooperative intergovernmental agreement as a cost savings measure.

Work on the park will begin in the fall of 1995 with bidding out final engineering with a completion date of May, 1996. Initial construction will be performed by the City of Elgin's Public Works Department in the fall of 1996. They will dig trenches and install underground utilities, prepare the road base, and begin landscaping rehabilitation of the site. The paving will be scheduled for the summer of 1996. The City of Elgin will request bids in the summer of 1996 for construction and will begin no later than October, 1996. Donations of trees, shrubs, installation of camping amenities, and finish work on other items will be completed in June, 1996. Grand opening of the park will be scheduled June 20, 1996.

The City of Elgin will retain control over the work plan. The city will modify the work plan and budget as needed during the project construction phase to insure the project is completed within budget and includes the major components of the project.

The city may bid the project out in as many as three components: construction of buildings, installation of camping amenities (fire pits, picnic tables, benches, etc), and finish landscaping. Individual contractors will not be limited to the number of project components they could bid on but will be required to post bonds or cash deposits with their bids.

Construction will be administrated by the City of Elgin and may be put out to bid as a separate work item. The grant funds will also be handled by the city and will conform to audit requirements. All donations and in-kind work will be documented as part of the administration process.

Evaluation:

No significant modifications are expected on the project as cost estimates and plan approval were made in May and June of 1995. The Elgin City Council will retain authority to amend the work plan and will receive input from the Elgin 2010 Committee who will serve in a advisory role on the project.

Construction will be monitored by the City of Elgin or by it designated administrator. Upon completion of construction, the site will be inspected by the Elgin City Recorder, Elgin Public Works Director, Elgin City Public Works Committee, and representatives of the Elgin 2010 Committee. Their inspection will be to insure the construction meets the intent of the design as presented by the architect.

The county building inspector will provide inspection of the project as work is conducted. Upon completion of the final inspection, a notice of completion will be posted at the park. After all waiting requirements have been completed, the city will begin marketing the park for public use.

Budget Narrative:

The total cost of this project is based on estimates from Planwest Associates. The project duration will be approximately twenty (20) months.

In-kind costs will be financed by the City of Elgin, Union County, or donated by local businesses and individuals.

Project expenses are detailed as follows:

Final Engineering	\$22,726
Roads, Parking, & Paving	48,800
Buildings	46,020
Irrigation, Water and Sewer System	55,500
Boat Ramp	6,000
Tables & Benches	7,900
Fire Rings & Grills	7,280
Electrical Service	11,200
Landscaping	43,560
Signs	1,000
Administration	27,271
Contingency	34,089
Total Project Costs	\$311,346

Sources of Funding is as follows:

Unidentified Grant	\$234,186	(75.22%)
City of Elgin In-Kind Match	33,500	(10.76%)
Union County In-Kind Match	22,300	(7.16%)
Business & Individual Donations	21,360	(6.86%)
Total Sources of Funding	\$311,346	(100.00%)

In-Kind match from the City of Elgin will include labor and use of city machinery for trenching, installing underground utilities, and preparation of the road base. In-Kind match from Union County will include use of paving machinery, labor, and mobilization costs from the county road department. Additional in-kind match will be available from local businesses and volunteers of materials and products. Total Match sources are 24.78% of the total project costs.

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